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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 15 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco)
(Vice-President)

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Operational activities for development (continued)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Office of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Amaziane (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/28, E/1992/29, E/1992/64; A/47/235-E/1992/69 and Add.1 and 2, A/47/264-E/1992/71; E/1992/73, E/1992/98; E/1992/L.23)

Mr. KONG (Director, Technical Coordination Policy Division, Department of Economic and Social Development) said that the restructuring of the Secretariat and, in particular, the consolidation of six entities into one, the Department of Economic and Social Development, was designed to maximize the Organization's impact in the economic and social sectors. The integration of analytical research and operational activities in the Department also made it possible to translate global policies into concrete work programmes in developing countries.

The Department's operational activities had placed increased emphasis on national capacity-building, multidisciplinary programme approach, decentralization and inter-agency cooperation at the field level, and national execution. Many of the operations had proved instrumental in promoting growth in various economic sectors of developing countries, such as natural resources and energy, economic management, development administration and integrated rural development. The Department had given greater support to government machinery for national execution and had also developed new initiatives relating to electoral administration, aid accountability and economies in transition. Specific efforts had also been deployed in the fields of environmental management and sustainable development in order to take an interdisciplinary approach to those issues.

As in previous years, the Department's expenditure in the Africa region were higher than in the other regions, amounting to about 47 per cent of total delivery. Integration of development planning and economic management

(Mr. Kong)

represented an important part of the Department's activities. Assistance to the least developed countries had been expanded, and about 400 projects totaling approximately $80 million had been developed in 1991. The Department would continue to base its collaboration with UNDP on the tripartite relationship. In view of the increasing importance of financing to most countries, developing countries must continue to have access to objective advice and technical services to support their projects on a politically neutral and commercially disinterested basis. The United Nations could play a more active role in providing technical cooperation services, if its resource base was strengthened through increased support from the regular budget and other sources such as multilateral financial institutions and bilateral channels. The eradication of poverty was essential in order to ensure lasting peace and security.

Mr. KAARIA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the basic aim of the Nordic proposals for reforming United Nations operational activities was to strengthen the Organization's role in development. It was essential to bring about a clearer division of labour between the United Nations system and the multilateral development banks, exploiting the relative strengths and comparative advantages of the various agencies. In view of the shift towards the World Bank and other international financial institutions in the field of multilateral technical assistance, United Nations technical assistance must be made more efficient and effective. There should also be clearer complementarity and closer cooperation among those organizations. The specialized agencies should become more qualified and relevant within their mandates. Developing countries needed the agencies' professional expertise and should be able to choose from among several multilateral partners.

It was regrettable that the Secretariat had been unable to complete the triennial comprehensive policy review in time for the current session. He hoped that the review paper would be issued well in advance of consideration of that question by the General Assembly and looked forward to an analysis of any impediments encountered in developing national programme frameworks and national strategies; moving towards a programme approach and national

(Mr. Kaaria, Finland)

execution; and establishing a more integrated United Nations presence in the field and strengthening the resident coordinator system. The report should contain clear recommendations on ways to overcome such impediments and implement resolutions 44/211 and 46/219.

The Nordic countries stressed the need to have a common understanding of such concepts as national execution and the programme approach so that they could be applied uniformly throughout the system. There was a need for system-wide governance, improved operational guidance and inter-agency coordination. The responsibility for implementing the new concepts set forth in General Assembly resolution 44/211 lay largely with the recipient Governments. Those Governments were also in a position to give strong impetus to the United Nations system in its programme approach. The governing bodies of agencies should give recipient countries support to that end.

National development plans and programme frameworks were a prerequisite for active United Nations development operations in any country. In view of the need for flexibility, it was necessary to strengthen the resident coordinator system and ensure an integrated approach and a more unified United Nations presence in the field. Noting that the Department of Economic and Social Development had both an operational arm and a responsibility for strategic work and coordination, he said that the Nordic countries were not fully convinced that assigning such a dual function to one department was an ideal solution.

Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that, while recognizing that neither governance nor executive management could work effectively alone, he wished to focus on the management of operational activities which, in the case of the United Nations development system, was too complex and fragmented. Although significant improvements had been made, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was not yet in a position to provide the overall management required. Moreover, although considerable time had elapsed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/211 - which set out complex directives concerning harmonization of programme cycles, common premises, national programme frameworks and strengthening of the resident coordinators that were remarkably similar to those set forth in General Assembly resolution 32/197 -

(Mr. Soutter, Canada)

the United Nations system remained unequipped to provide the overall management required to ensure their implementation and progress had therefore been painfully slow.

According to the information provided to the Council, harmonization of programming cycles had taken place in 27 countries but had not been possible in 18. That left some 70 countries where, it would seem, no progress had been made. Similarly, substantive action on common premises had been made or was planned in 19 countries, which represented only about 16 per cent of the total. The plan for the achievement of common premises requested in General Assembly resolution 46/219 apparently had not been produced, clearly indicating the lack of overall management of the process. With regard to national programme frameworks, only a few anecdotal examples were provided of countries where some steps had been taken. As to the strengthening of the role of the resident coordinator, more resources were sought when what was needed was greater authority.

It was not his intention to allocate blame for the problem, which was structural in nature. Coordination of the essentially autonomous elements of the United Nations development system would not alone ensure that directives issued would be implemented. What was needed was overall system direction and management from the United Nations Secretariat. The Office of Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation had been established to fill that gap but, due in part to the fact that the position had not been given any real authority, it had not done so. It was essential that the new Department of Economic and Social Development not be just a monitoring and reporting agent for the system, and certainly not just another implementing arm thereof. Rather it should be a true system manager deriving its authority from the Council and the Secretary-General. If it was to accomplish that goal with integrity and impact, the Department must be divested of its role in operational activities, for system management and policy development were incompatible with the role of project executing agent, given the potential for conflict of interest.

Clear system management responsibilities and authority also were critically important in the field. To that end, his delegation endorsed the

(Mr. Soutter, Canada)

proposals by the Administrator of UNDP for a single United Nations country office under the authority of a single resident coordinator appointed by, and reporting to, the Secretary-General. The coordinator and the Government concerned would be responsible for designing a single, coherent and integrated country programme based on capacity-building. Necessary corollaries to that approach were maximum possible decentralization, tightly coordinated overall management, personnel mobility and maximum use of national professionals.

His delegation believed that greater attention must be paid to evaluating the real impact of programmes, as compared with assessing compliance with rules and regulations. As to the question of sustainability, a project which, on completion, required continued government support, might well be questionable. Projects must be sustainable not only financially, but also environmentally, politically, socially and culturally. Furthermore, while cumbersome national bureaucracies could prove a problem, the role of the United Nations was not to replace or circumvent them, but rather to help national authorities develop more efficient and streamlined bureaucracies through policy advice and capacity-building.

Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICHL (Austria) endorsed the assessment in the Nordic memorandum on reform of United Nations governance and finance (E/1992/91) that the fragmentation of the governance of development activities of the United Nations should be remedied by assigning to a single body the task of high-level discussion on development issues and the provision of policy guidance and cohesion to the relevant executive organs. The Economic and Social Council should be entrusted with the function which the Nordic memorandum allocated to an international development council. The functions were entirely compatible with the role established for the Economic and Social Council in the relevant provisions of the Charter and were consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/264.

If the Council was to assume the functions of an international development council, its role should be confined to providing high-level political advice, coordination and supervision of operational activities. The Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, in which all United Nations Members were represented on an equal footing, was the appropriate

(Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl, Austria)

forum for debate on the economic and social issues which currently were discussed in the sessional committees of the Council. Accordingly, the Economic and Social Committees of the Council should be eliminated. Responsibility for technical decisions with regard to programme budget implications under rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Council could be reallocated.

With respect to the relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the operational agencies, her delegation concurred with the suggestion in the Nordic memorandum that smaller executive bodies operating on the basis of constituencies were desirable. How best to effect the reform of existing governing bodies should be discussed more thoroughly, including at the individual agency level.

The relationship between the proposed international development council and the proposed commission on sustainable development should be carefully examined. The proposal by the Netherlands representative during the high-level segment that the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council should be preceded by a short, high-level meeting of the Commission should be fully explored. The relationship between the two prospective bodies must be borne in mind when the mandate and terms of reference of the Commission were established.

The establishment of unified United Nations field offices should be energetically pursued. She concurred with the Nordic project's conclusion that issues of governance and finance were linked, and agreed that international development cooperation as an expression of international solidarity should be a shared endeavour. Her delegation therefore supported the medium-term goal of establishing a tripartite funding system combining assessed contributions, negotiated pledges and voluntary contributions. The concerns raised by the representative of Japan at the preceding meeting would have to be discussed in detail as the reform process proceeded.

Her delegation was pleased that the Secretary-General had undertaken a very thorough study in connection with the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations

(Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl, Austria)

system. Coordination of operational activities within the system must be enhanced, and the resident representatives should be empowered to coordinate system activities in the field.

Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) supported the suggestions made pursuant to General Assembly decision 46/465 to improve the management of operational activities, efficiency and delivery of economic and technical assistance to the developing countries. The United Nations development system had substantially enhanced the developing countries' capacity for self-reliance and had improved their standard of living, and it should continue to honour its time-tested principles of providing assistance on a multilateral, universal, neutral and grant basis.

His delegation cautioned against any derogation from the principle of respect for national sovereignty during the reform process. The democratic decision-making process must be assured by adhering to the principle of the equal right of all States to participate in United Nations affairs, irrespective of their size, power or wealth. His delegation also opposed any attempt to use reform as a pretext to attach political conditions to assistance provided through the United Nations development system. Reform was a gradual process and should be achieved by seeking consensus, after taking into consideration the views of all sides. His delegation was prepared to take an active part in the relevant consultations on the basis of those principles. Moreover, reform should lead to increased financing for operational activities on a more stable and predictable basis and should not add to the burden of the developing countries.

With respect to coordination, coordination at the field level was primarily the responsibility of the Government of the country concerned. Resident coordinators should be drawn from the entire United Nations system, should demonstrate leadership qualities and should be responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance as well as operational activities for development. Coordination should strive to ensure maximum responsiveness to the needs of Governments. Coordination at the headquarters level should ensure a clear division of responsibilities within the United Nations development system as well as the complementarity of efforts.

(Mr. Nie Hualiang, China)

At its 1992 sessions, the UNDP Governing Council had wasted precious time and had diverted attention from the pressing problems of the developing countries by debating the subject of political freedoms as discussed in the World Development Report 1992. The topic was outside its mandate and UNDP should cease working on the subject.

His delegation recognized that enhanced national management and capacity-building for self-reliance were central to the process of national execution. United Nations organizations and their field offices had the obligation to enhance the national execution capability of recipient countries, but they must not take over execution responsibilities from Governments. Furthermore, in order to smooth the transition to national execution, the programmes and funds concerned should assist in training cadres for the recipient country, particularly in financial management. Since national capabilities and circumstances differed, a nuanced approach should be adopted in pursuing the goal of national execution.

In his own country, the programme approach called for in General Assembly resolution 44/211 had created problems, some of which had even interfered with the normal project approval process. He cautioned the relevant organizations against arbitrarily combining projects into so-called programmes to qualify for review and approval, before the real meaning of the programme approach was fully understood. That practice, if left unchecked, would interfere with the smooth implementation of the current country programming cycle.

Mr. PAULINICH (Peru) endorsed the spirit of the Nordic United Nations project, adding that, as was clear from the summary by the President of the Council at the conclusion of the high-level segment, international cooperation for development was broader in scope than solely cooperation with respect to operational activities. His delegation therefore believed that the consensus reflected in General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 46/235 should serve as the point of departure for the reform of operational activities. Furthermore, the fundamental principles of universality, neutrality, flexibility and non-conditionality must be retained.

His delegation saw merit in the Nordic countries' proposals for a coordinated and integrated approach within operational activities and for a

(Mr. Paulinich, Peru)

clear delimitation of functions between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the executing agencies. However, it could not endorse the proposal to eliminate the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. Furthermore, in considering the proposal to establish smaller executive bodies, delegations should, when striving for technical efficiency, bear fully in mind that the United Nations was essentially a political body and that the representation of Member States was an important factor. It was also essential to respect the fundamental principle of equitable geographical distribution.

With regard to the financial system, his delegation was not convinced that resources would increase or become more predictable if mandatory contributions were required. Lastly, he expressed the hope that his views would be taken into account by the Group of 77 at its forthcoming consultations in September.

Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that the new accent placed on coordination should help increase the potential for multilateral technical cooperation and, in general, enhance the effectiveness of the entire system of operational activities. The reform of the system of technical assistance was closely connected with the general remodelling of the United Nations and his delegation believed that the parameters for decisions concerning operational activities should be determined by the political decisions of the General Assembly.

Attention should be given to the positive experience of organisational reforms carried out by a number of agencies, primarily UNDP, at the country and regional level, as well as to the proposals submitted by the Nordic countries and the analytical report contained in document E/1992/64. The proposed International Development Council could play an important role and that the task of its establishment should be performed by the Economic and Social Council.

There should be close coordination between the activities of the various subdivisions of the United Nations system, in order to avoid duplication. His delegation had therefore been encouraged by the increased interaction between the various agencies concerned with operational activities, on the one hand,

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

and the Bretton Woods institutions, on the other. The universal nature of operational activities should also be further developed. Institutional decisions adopted by UNDP and UNICEF on the Commonwealth of Independent States and Central and Eastern Europe could help with the incorporation of the problems of transition economies into the Organization's operational activities, without diminishing the attention given to developing countries as the primary recipients of technical assistance.

While adequate and stable funding for operational activities must be ensured, such contributions must always be voluntary. Consideration should therefore be given to such proposals as joint financing with the full participation of donors and recipients and the formation of supplementary voluntary and special funds. At the level of strategy, efforts must be made to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations response to recipient countries' needs and to harmonize the programming cycles of all the funding agencies with national planning timetables. It was also essential to accelerate the transition from the project to the programme approach, to develop the integrated approach without limiting the scope for initiative at the field level and to explore means of strengthening the resident representative system. At the same time, the dimensions of human development and environmental sustainability must also be incorporated in operational activities.

Relations between Russia and UNDP had entered a qualitatively new era. Technical and advisory assistance was being rendered to the economic reforms in his country and it was important to promote the participation of Russian organizations in the UNDP programmes and projects. With reference to UNICEF, he noted a range of important measures adopted in Russia in the area of mother and child care and the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The invaluable work performed by UNICEF should be enhanced by developing its forecasting capacities and emergency functions. The proposals by UNICEF on reforming the system of operational activities therefore merited close attention, particularly those concerning the enhancement of inter-agency coordination and the determination of needs and priorities.

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

With reference to the reservations expressed by Finland regarding the mandate of the newly created Department of Economic and Social Development, he said that the Department's combination of operational and analytical functions was one of its positive features and that, in time, it would prove highly effective. Operational and analytical functions had been successfully combined in the former United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and the new Department had already shown positive signs in the performance of its tasks.

Mr. KITATANI (United Nations Population Fund) said that in responding to the needs of the developing world, the United Nations system must strive to implement internationally agreed concepts and strategies to promote social justice, safeguard the environment, foster better health and education and meet other basic human development requirements. The United Nations system must be streamlined and strengthened in the pursuit of those goals and must operate as a coherent whole. Enhanced coordination in operational activities must include reforms in governance and financing as well.

Such coordination should involve all the organizations of the United Nations system at all levels. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had proved to be extremely useful in encouraging dialogue on common policy issues and taking initiatives to enhance coordination both at Headquarters and in the field. Harmonizing the programming cycles of operational organizations with the planning cycles of Governments was an important aspect of the work of JCGP and that process was expanding in many developing countries. The Group had a comparative advantage in seeking to expand the social dimensions of structural adjustment programmes and had cooperated in important initiatives connected with streamlining policies on common services and premises in the field, training, the role of women in development, and joint programming in Africa. Further efforts were needed to promote harmonization and coordination within JCGP itself and strengthen the resident coordinator system at the country level in order to ensure the success of the Group's country-level initiatives. JCGP was committed to pursuing its work in strengthening coordination at all levels.

(Mr. Kitatani)

UNFPA continued to give high priority to coordination in operational activities with organizations outside the JCGP structure and, in particular, had been active in the work of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions and supported its role in coordinating operational activities throughout the United Nations system.

Further action was needed at the legislative level to ensure coordination among all organizations involved in operational activities. In that regard, he welcomed the Nordic proposal to set up an international development council. In order to carry out their operations effectively, the various agencies and organizations of the system should have their own governing bodies, maintaining their separate identities. In reporting to the international development council, those bodies would focus on implementing their specific mandates. Cohesive work by all organizations at the country level was essential in order to ensure the effectiveness of United Nations operational activities. The proposed commission on sustainable development should play an important role in helping to ensure better coordination of the normative, substantive and operational activities of the entire system.

He welcomed the Nordic proposal for a three-tier financing system for operational activities in view of the need for more secure funding in order to ensure stable programming and reduce the time and effort devoted to fund-raising activities. Far greater emphasis should be placed on the social and human development sectors, including population activities. Lastly, he looked forward to a full discussion of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly since UNFPA had participated actively in the preparations for the review.

Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland) said that the central problems facing the international community - poverty, economic stagnation, unemployment, ecological and social degradation, AIDS - remained unchanged. The challenge was to find the optimal policy for each development situation and to build capacity at the country level; while some progress had been made in that regard since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/211, there was a need for further adjustment of policies and procedures so as to make United Nations technical cooperation more effective.

(Mr. Czarkowski, Poland)

Poland had a number of comments to make from the point of view of a country making the transition to a market economy.

First, reform should take into account the changing roles of all partners in development, given the relative lack of growth in the world economy, which had forced Governments to cut budgets and to make institutional and staff changes. As a result, there was a great need for training programmes.

Second, there was a related need to ensure the coherence of systems and support material among partners in technical cooperation; UNDP should, through its field offices, make the relevant documentation available to recipient institutions and agencies.

Third, recipient countries often made sizeable contributions in cash and in kind to local UNDP programmes, but such contributions were not always fully recognized; that should be corrected.

Fourth, all partners needed to do continuous evaluation of technical cooperation activities; if development programmes were to succeed, evaluation methods must be improved so that the net assistance reaching the end user could be gauged.

Fifth, governance reform should not cause the loss of certain useful features of Governing Council practice: Council members' visits to recipient countries; participation of resident representatives in formal and informal Council meetings; and the holding, during such meetings, of public seminars.

Sixth, the reform of United Nations operational activities for development should include an assessment of such things as the programme approach, national execution, successor arrangements for agency support costs, decentralization, and multidisciplinary team technical advice. UNDP should help design a system for such assessment in conjunction with the specialized agencies and financial institutions.

Seventh, human development reports would become a more useful tool for development partners if greater reliance were placed on locally provided and processed data.

Eighth, the success of multilateral cooperation would depend on the partners' ability to design concrete undertakings and ensure their sustainability. UNDP experience and the potential of its networks of offices should be fully exploited.

The PRESIDENT noted that a consensus was beginning to emerge on certain points. Thus, to eliminate duplication between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, there appeared to be growing support for the idea of abolishing the Council's Economic and Social Committees.

The Nordic countries' proposal for broadening the funding base of United Nations operational activities and the idea of a unified structure at the country level remained somewhat more controversial.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that the key issue with respect to national execution was the need for a major effort at capacity-building. It would be interesting to hear what the various agencies had to say about the barriers to full implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 in respect of national execution in general and capacity-building in particular.

Mr. EDGREN (United Nations Development Programme) said that experiments in national execution took time and should not be hastily judged. Some bilateral donors had tried to go too fast and their projects had, in practice, ended up being run by the field offices. He thought that genuine national execution might take 5 to 10 years to be achieved. The United Nations system was trying to change things, but was impeded by inertia, by local rules and regulations, and by the sheer magnitude of training and adaptation needed, which caused Governments to see no financial advantage in national execution. In some cases a hybrid scheme was being used whereby Governments had ownership and responsibility but invited agencies to do the actual implementation. Where local administrations were weak, so much outside expertise was needed that national execution became a thinly disguised agency execution.

Such obstacles were to be expected when completely changing a modus operandi, and were being worked on by the funds and agencies. There was slow but accelerating progress, and he expected good results by the end of 1992.

Mr. CHASE (World Food Programme) said that his programme's activities were, in 90 countries, entirely the responsibility of the Governments concerned; title to the foodstuffs supplied passed to the Government at the port of entry, and the Government bore the incidental costs

(Mr. Chase)

of food-related development activities. Sometimes, however, financial or institutional weaknesses prevented Governments from taking full responsibility, and in such cases the World Food Programme wou assist them in undertaking such activities.

In the least developed countries, storage and transport costs might be underwritten, as well as wages, and WFP would if necessary pay to bring in computers and other equipment and would help design monitoring systems.

Finally, he noted that more than half of the WFP training budget was devoted to local staff and that results had been encouraging.

Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that national execution presupposed national empowerment which, in turn, implied a certain national capacity; much was being done to foster such capacity. UNESCO had collaborated with UNDP in more than 10 countries on so-called "upstream" work - policy analysis and formulation - trying to build national capacity and so work towards national execution. That approach was perhaps not the best since upstream work involved change whereas national Governments tended to seek little or no change. However, Governments still looked to the agencies of the United Nations system to act as a catalyst or even to take over nominal execution of projects while involving national bodies. That approach seemed more likely to ensure progress towards the goal of national execution.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said that his organization had a different perspective, since it was neither a funding nor an executing agency. UNICEF favoured a programme approach wherein goals were tightly defined, with strong accountability for use of funds, but assistance was very flexibly moulded. Its programmes were 100 per cent nationally executed.

Mr. ABYANKHAR (International Fund for Agricultural Development), responding to the question raised by the United Kingdom, said that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) worked on a project basis within the context of a national strategy for poverty alleviation. IFAD projects were 100 per cent nationally executed and, as they were fairly large, involving US$ 8-10 million and a similar amount in co-financing, it was

(Mr. Abyankhar, IFAD)

possible when developing them to envisage the type of capacity-building measures that would be required.

With reference to the need for sustainability, he pointed out that IFAD endeavoured to ensure that its projects were not only self-sustaining but also generated resources, adding to the material and institutional resources of the Government: it was possible, therefore, for projects to be fully nationally executed and to leave behind a stronger capacity for future execution and replication.

Mr. EDGREN (United Nations Development Programme) said that, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) programmes offered numerous opportunities for national execution, some ad hoc units at the country level had been forced to revert to agency execution. He therefore stressed the need for careful preliminary studies on the available capacities for national execution adding that, in certain cases, it might be necessary to adopt an intermediate stage of joint national and agency execution.

National execution in technical assistance was quite different from that in World Bank or IFAD projects. FAO was involved with technical assistance administered in combination with World Bank loans, to a total of approximately US$ 25 million per year, all of which was agency-executed, while the project itself was executed by the Government. Finally, he noted the great importance of capacity-building, which should be stepped up with new UNDP funding, thereby further promoting the future possibilities of national execution.

The PRESIDENT said that in certain countries, including his own, departments were sometimes reluctant to assume United Nations projects since, given the lack of consultancy services, national execution was tantamount to government execution. UNDP projects involved a number of departments and sometimes resulted in 60 or more small, relatively low-budget projects offering little financial incentive and entailing burdensome reporting procedures.

Consequently, Governments were ambivalent: some departments were ardent advocates of national execution while others - such as the ministries of agriculture and public works, more familiar with the problems on the ground and manpower and budgetary constraints - were reluctant to become involved.

Miss JANJUA (Pakistan) requested further clarification from UNICEF on the exact distinction between the project and the programme approach.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that, in view of the general agreement expressed at the Council's previous meeting on the need for further information on the programme approach, it would be useful to hear the views of other agencies on the subject, in addition to those already expressed by UNICEF and UNDP.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) replied that the project approach was clearly defined in terms of geographic area and types of activities providing assistance in a specific sector. The success of a project was gauged in terms of effective use of inputs and coherent management rather than its impact on a national scale.

The programme approach, on the other hand, aimed at achieving broad national goals by setting priorities with the recipient Governments; success was measured in terms of progress at the national level. That approach provided greater flexibility and ensured greater governmental and agency accountability in achieving clearly stated and monitorable goals.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

For participants only

E/1992/SR.28
23 July 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 16 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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Operational activities for development (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/28, Supp. No. 8; E/1992/29, Supp. No. 9; E/1992/64, 73 and 98; A/47/264-E/1992/71; E/1992/L.23)

Mr. CHIRILA (Romania) said that the Council's deliberations were undoubtedly of particular importance for the 1992 triennial policy review of operational activities. His country was unconditionally attached to the principle of strengthening those activities on the basis of genuine consensus between donor and recipient countries. The ideas contained in the consultants' report (E/1992/64) and in the Nordic proposals contained in document E/1992/91 should be carefully considered in the interests of achieving more effective response by the Organization to the concerns of its membership.

An improved financing system for operational activities implied more equitable burden-sharing, the more sustained provision of resources and a substantially increased volume of programmes and funding. It was also important to maximize the overall impact of operational activities, and he commended the ideas expressed during the high-level segment by the Administrator of UNDP with regard to the restructuring of the United Nations development system and the views put forward by the representatives of various agencies with regard to technical cooperation among developing countries. Increased cohesiveness at the country level, together with rational decentralization and consistent system-wide personnel policies and the efficient use of available resources would be studied in the triennial review.

Romania had benefited from extensive cooperation with a variety of United Nations agencies, and was pleased to report that the country programme for 1992-1996, drawn up in close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator, reflected the new requirements of the emerging market economy and also Romania's participation in a number of regional projects for Europe.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the discussion on operational activities for development had been extremely fruitful. His delegation looked forward to the document which would prepare the groundwork for the forthcoming triennial policy review, and hoped that emphasis in implementing General Assembly resolution 44/211 would be placed on national programmes, field activities, the resident coordinator system, and decentralization - the latter with particular reference to accountability and training.

Enhancement of national capacities should be the primary concern of operational activities. Identified gaps in that respect should be addressed through collective effort. The role of the resident coordinators should be strengthened, with due emphasis on team leadership, and coordination at the field level should also be enhanced. The draft guidelines evolved by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) could provide a useful starting-point for reflection on the programming process.

It should be a fundamental principle that any assistance must be consistent with the recipient Government's plans and priorities. At the same time, efforts to decentralize should promote collaboration at the field level.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that revitalization and restructuring in the economic, social and related fields was beginning to show results, pointing the way to a more effective Economic and Social Council. The newly created ad hoc working group on reform was an indication of the commitment to reorganization. An impressive agenda for change had been set.

The triennial policy review, due in the fall, would find a solid record of achievement over the past three years. UNDP Governing Council decisions on support costs and national execution had restructured the UNDP tripartite system of cooperation between UNDP, the major sectoral agencies and recipient Governments, which had remained basically unchanged since 1970. The new tripartite system gave UNDP greater control over the quality of support services from agencies, created incentives for agencies to strengthen their support for national policy, programming and implementation processes in recipient Governments, and encouraged Governments to take full responsibility for project management and administrative support.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

In addition, there had been movement away from the traditional project-by-project approach, which had often led to competition among donors for scarce staff and budgetary resources and had failed to build up national self-reliance. UNDP had initiated a programme-based approach to cooperation and national capacity-building which should strengthen national capacities to implement coherent development policies and make better use of development assistance.

Much remained to be done, however, particularly in terms of decentralizing to the country level, harmonizing the programming cycles of United Nations agencies and generally moving towards integration of development activities at the country level. The programme approach required the harmonization of programming and evaluation among funding agencies, the parallel decentralization of their technical capacities to the country level, and multidisciplinary management by resident coordinators.

Coordination could not, however, be achieved by administrative fiat, but should start from the sharing of goals and strategies by United Nations organizations. Most United Nations system resources supported bureaucratic infrastructures and a major restructuring of field operations would make more programme resources available.

His delegation supported a clear linkage between the resident coordinator function and the UNDP central funding function. In addition, centrally funded mechanisms were essential in mobilizing support by the United Nations system for national development programmes.

The resident coordinator must be given authority to develop an overall assistance strategy through a policy dialogue with the Government, with the aim of producing a unified United Nations system programme. The resident coordinator should also be the resident representative of the United Nations and its funding programmes. Such an approach would ensure integrated programming and overall coordination of United Nations activities, while preserving the autonomy of each individual programme. Further, the foundations would be laid for a unified field office which would eventually represent all the agencies of the system. That would improve cost-effectiveness.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that there was a need to strengthen the relationship between research and policy analysis and operational activities for development; that the analytical capacity of the United Nations system should be increased and refocused on such cross-sectoral themes as sustainable development; and that the United Nations proper should refocus its involvement in operational activities on cross-sectoral areas in which it had a unique capacity. In particular, involvement of the United Nations proper in technical cooperation should be limited to analytical and technical support for activities financed by United Nations funding programmes, and should not include project management. The United Nations Secretariat could make a significant contribution to building up national capacities for programme management, but not through the provision of high-cost administrative and operational support services. Similarly, the specialized agencies should strengthen their analytical and technical capacities and move out of administrative and operational support functions. To that end, the UNDP Office for Projects Services should service the United Nations system as a whole.

Lastly, his delegation welcomed the Nordic proposals in document E/1992/91, especially with respect to governance.

Ms. DOWSETT (Observer for New Zealand) said that the spirit of cooperation evident from the current session augured well for the forthcoming triennial policy review, but that it was regrettable that the comprehensive report on operational activities was not yet available. Her delegation wished to highlight some of the aspects it would like to see covered in the report.

It was to be anticipated that the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 would form the basis of the report, which would assess the uneven progress made by various elements of the United Nations system in implementing that resolution. It was further envisaged that the review would identify measures that might be taken to advance the objectives of the resolution and, perhaps most importantly, would address the need for the system to take into account the process initiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

(Ms. Dowsett, Observer, New Zealand)

The fact that the triennial review would be taking place at the same time as the General Assembly's consideration of the outcome of that Conference would provide a stimulus for some radical thinking on how the United Nations system could best ensure the integration of environment and development at the operational level.

General Assembly resolution 44/211 called for more integrated and coordinated programming of the United Nations system, and in that area the report should examine first and foremost the potential for an enhanced United Nations role in national programme formulation, and the ways in which to accelerate the shift to a programme approach. The issue of integrated programming and operational response had particular relevance for small developing countries with limited infrastructure. The report should also review programme accountability, an essential part of United Nations operational activities.

The report should outline ways of furthering national capacity-building, for example through national execution, training and other support measures. National capacities would also be strengthened by decentralization of the United Nations system, but that would depend on improved training at the field level and, most importantly, on full financial and programme accountability.

Last but not least, the proposals for a unified United Nations field presence and the designation of resident coordinators could usefully be examined with a view to strengthening the system.

Significant progress had already been made in revitalizing the economic and social sectors, and her delegation was greatly encouraged both by the success of the high-level segment and by the decision to establish an ad hoc working group to consider proposals for reform.

Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the United Nations had a pivotal role to play in promoting international cooperation in the interests of people-centred development. However, the current dialogue on international development cooperation suggested that there was a need to adapt the United Nations system so as to enhance its impact on the problems of the recipient countries. Steps must be taken to enable those countries to preserve and consolidate democratic principles, despite the development crisis, of the

(Mr. King, Trinidad and Tobago)

past decade and to take advantage of the opportunities which might arise in the 1990s.

The fundamental principles outlined in General Assembly resolution 44/211 should continue to be the basis for operational activities during the decade. For example, it was for the Governments of recipient countries to take external inputs into account in preparing their country programmes; national plans and priorities remained the only viable frame of reference for programming at the national level. The universality, and neutrality of those activities, and their voluntary and multilateral character, must also be preserved for the benefit of developing countries.

Coordination among secretariats at the headquarters level, as well as at the regional and national levels, required urgent attention to avoid duplication. Given the autonomy of the specialized agencies, the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its subsidiary bodies, in addition to the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, must be encouraged to continue their contribution towards greater coordination.

At the national level, the establishment of common premises, and the response of the United Nations system to a common programme document in the context of a programme approach to operational activities, should enhance coordination and promote the effective use of resources. It was essential to pursue excellence rather than competition between the various agencies.

He noted that successor arrangements for agency support costs continued to be studied in accordance with paragraph 25 of General Assembly resolution 44/211, but stressed that other elements of that resolution should not be overlooked. He awaited the report for the forthcoming triennial policy review.

There was still a lack of sustained and predictable funding to fulfil the needs of the developing countries. The proposals in the Nordic United Nations project (E/1992/91) were interesting, and should be considered by the new ad hoc working group.

His delegation agreed that the funding of operational activities and official development assistance, when considered under the heading of resources for development, were interrelated. However, operational activities

(Mr. King, Trinidad and Tobago)

occupied a specific niche in technical cooperation, one in which the United Nations system had a comparative advantage, partly because of its neutrality.

Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) welcomed the efforts being made to streamline management and end duplication while increasing the effectiveness of operational activities. There was clearly consensus on moving ahead with further reform. The Nordic countries had submitted proposals to that end, as had other members of the Council.

UNESCO was fully committed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. In that connection there seemed to be no serious dialogue between the various governing bodies. Effective coordination at the country level must also be achieved.

UNESCO feared that the specialized agencies, just as they were moving away from project execution to a new focus on strategy elaboration and sector analysis at the country level, might see their role weakened in a reinvigorated United Nations development system if their respective governing bodies were not involved from the outset in the quest for improved governance.

One element in the rationale for having originally established semi-autonomous United Nations specialized agencies had been recognition of the virtues of pluralism. Indeed, many valuable development initiatives had emerged from that system of unruly federalism, without a clear hierarchical structure. At a time when central planning and bureaucratic authoritarianism had fallen into disrepute, and when UNDP was proclaiming the virtues of participatory development, the calls for stricter lines of command in setting the parameters of multilateral development cooperation were somewhat surprising.

With regard to new support cost arrangements, substantive inputs from agencies into the system's development planning might drastically decline if the system was not soon running smoothly. In promoting national execution, it was important not to substitute UNDP services for national administration and management, otherwise there would be no clear distinction between national execution and what would, in effect, be additional direct execution by UNDP. A related issue was that of the coexistence in the same institution of

(Mr. Bahr, UNESCO)

system-wide coordination at the country level and direct execution of operational activities. Effective cooperation required a balance between convergence and complementarity.

The Nordic proposals envisaged a scheme whereby voluntary contributions would account for only 30 per cent of overall contributions, the remainder being negotiated pledges. Such a change might, however, signal the end of UNDP's donor-neutral, indicative-planning-figure pool of funding, a feature which had made for neutrality and universality. Lastly, his delegation supported the endeavours to increase the leadership role of resident coordinators, in which connection UNESCO would support a more neutral selection from a larger pool of candidates.

Mr. DYOMIN (Belarus) said that the post-confrontational world offered opportunities for a transition to a higher-level of international cooperation in tackling urgent global problems. The basis for a practical approach lay in General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 46/219, the report on strengthening the operational activities of the United Nations system (E/1992/64), the decisions taken at the Rio Conference, and the Nordic United Nations project (E/1992/91).

Greater coordination was clearly required, but structural reform within the Organization must be undertaken circumspectly, allowing due time for analysis and assessment. It was essential to avoid the proliferation of new bodies, and the Economic and Social Council should have a coordinating role to avoid overlapping. The new working group might prepare a recommendation to that effect for submission to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

One promising proposal was to streamline the agencies responsible for funds and programmes. However, his delegation shared the view that the interests of all Member States must be properly represented within those bodies.

The informal discussions held the previous day had clarified, to some extent, the possibilities of a rapid transition to a programme approach to planning. The advantages afforded by that approach were indisputable, but again common sense must be the governing criterion. He could understand the

(Mr. Dyomin, Belarus)

reservations expressed by the representative of China with regard to the universal application of programmes. In the recent past, Belarus had experienced the impact of ambitious programmes which had fallen short of implementation.

His delegation agreed that voluntary contributions continue to be the most reliable source of funding. At the same time, in certain cases there might be recourse to several sources of funding from both voluntary and assessed contributions.

He supported the proposal for strengthening and regularizing interaction with the Bretton Woods institutions, with which his country was in direct contact.

In 1992 Belarus had been accorded the status of a recipient of technical assistance from UNDP, in line with the principle of universality, on which future United Nations operational activities should be based. Technical assistance for the reforms under way in his country would be advantageous to the developing countries by helping to strengthen their potential for development and assistance.

A United Nations office had recently been opened in Belarus, with technical cooperation as a primary concern. The UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus had shown complete understanding of the need to enhance the status of the Resident Coordinator in the course of the negotiations.

As a result of the difficulties experienced in the transitional period of restructuring the State institutions concerned with children and mothers, and owing to its lack of experience of government, Belarus had not yet finalized a national programme of action to implement the goals of the World Summit for Children. However, the Government was actively pursuing those goals, despite the difficulties of transition to a market economy and the enormous task of making good the damage caused by the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that the European Community delegations would welcome comments from the specialized agencies indicating whether they had a common understanding of what a programme approach entailed. In particular, it would be of interest to know to what extent an

(Mr. Barnett, United Kingdom)

integrated approach was being taken to the successor States of the former Soviet Union, and what steps the Administrative Committee on Coordination was taking to define such an approach.

Mr. RADE (Observer for the Netherlands) asked what had been done by UNDP in terms of a unified approach towards United Nations system activities in the newly independent States.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that steps had been taken by the specialized agencies to define a programme approach towards the newly independent States, although such an approach was not appropriate in all situations. Nevertheless, national leadership was always essential, posing the challenge of how the United Nations system could contribute. An impact had already been made and more results would follow. FAO had a contribution to make in its normative work in addition to its field operations. The agency was fully aware of the Council's desire for a coordinated approach and was willing to work along those lines.

Mr. DEANE (World Health Organization) said that the structure of WHO lent itself to a programme approach rather more than did the structure of some other specialized agencies. WHO typically dealt with ministries of health in every Government, which made it somewhat easier to coordinate inputs in line with a country's national health programme. WHO stressed health structures and tried to help develop methods that would assist Governments in addressing health issues. Some 60 per cent of WHO activities were funded through its regular budget, which made for continuity. The emphasis was on national execution.

A project-based approach was not incompatible with a programme approach, which should not be seen as a panacea. One feature of a fully integrated approach was a certain loss of visibility in terms of specific donors, in that it was harder to see the precise impact of a specific contribution. A programme approach could mean more flexibility in the sense of more upstream planning, but less flexibility in that it might be harder to reorient resources already committed, which might then make it necessary to approach donors for additional funding.

Lastly, WHO welcomed the interest displayed by many delegations in harmonizing the approach taken to issues of such importance to development.

Mr. KITATANI (United Nations Population Fund) said that, with regard to the programme approach, UNFPA fielded strategy and review missions, which involved Governments, relevant agencies and donors, with the aim of producing a national programme, and that guidelines were provided in advance to all concerned. Copies of the guidelines were available on request to Council members.

Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) said that the developing countries needed help in capacity-building in order to prepare their medium-term and long-term development plans. The help provided by the United Nations system must be available at the outset for policy formulation, and must take into account possibilities for other external funding, either through bilateral official development assistance or through regional groups such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations. The chief difficulty would be in planning overall strategy, because of the likelihood that individual donors would stress particular programme components. Therefore, the United Nations system's response to capacity-building requirements should include efforts aimed at ensuring a well-balanced funding strategy and promoting a suitable alignment of the various projects established pursuant to the programmes.

Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that the recent shift in the United Nations development system, with its increased focus on the programme approach, seemed to have progressed more in some parts of that system than in others, as several members of the Council had observed. Therefore, he would like the specialized agencies and the Department of Economic and Social Development to express their views about the way in which the decentralization measures should proceed, including the role and recruitment sources of resident coordinators, and on how they foresaw their own organization's involvement.

Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the United Nations system's responses could not be automatic or uniform, since government policies, which must be paramount in any development programme, all differed, and guidelines alone would provide no major solution, as could be seen when recalling the many guidelines produced in the past. Overemphasis of the machinery aspect seemed questionable in

(Mr. Bahr, UNESCO)

regard to a process in which the Government was the lead partner, and was surely not in the spirit of resolution 44/211.

UNESCO's own experience with the programme approach had been useful. Details of its work in a number of countries, including Benin, Chad and Viet Nam, could be made available to interested delegations, who were also invited to visit workshops in the field. The emphasis was strongly on national capacity-building, the international bodies serving only as providers of resources and expertise. Given a suitably flexible degree of coordination and the recognition that no simple universal mechanism existed, the highly satisfactory results achieved by UNESCO hitherto would doubtless continue. Lastly, he felt that the current exchange of views was very valuable.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) stressed the importance of the experience gained by field personnel, some of whom should be invited to participate in the debate at future sessions. It was clear that the role of resident coordinator would need to be streamlined in the light of the many observations already made, including the comment by the representative of UNESCO about greater flexibility of coordination, and some guidelines seemed called for. One factor which perhaps weakened that role was occasional inter-agency conflict; she would therefore like the agencies' representatives to indicate what obstacles they foresaw. The final deliberations would of course have to take place in the General Assembly.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that his organization's activities were already decentralized to a considerable degree despite budgetary constraints, which were, however, hampering further moves in that direction. Yet the proposed new support cost arrangements would have a centralizing effect; the inputs available under those arrangements had already forced FAO to relinquish over 100 field posts. Relations between field staff and resident coordinators were very good; he knew of no institutional difficulties in that regard. But he feared that to combine coordination and execution tasks in the resident coordinator's role created an ambiguity which could impair effectiveness. It should be noted, too, that over 80 per cent of the current incumbents' time was spent on UNDP

(Mr. Watt, FAO)

business. To sum up, he felt that the establishment of resident coordinators would be a positive step given the right modalities, including a better mechanism.

FAO field representatives contributed inputs to country programmes as well as operational functions, although the latter would continue to decline in the absence of adequate UNDP resources. FAO's experience in general bore out the effectiveness of adequate complementarity. Since the Council's deliberations often seemed based on perceptions rather than reality, he agreed that the inclusion of some field experience would be useful.

Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) formally proposed that field representatives, including those of regional bodies and non-governmental organizations, should be invited to attend the Council's deliberations on operational activities. Perhaps the Bureau could consider the matter at the next organizational session. In addition, he would like the agencies' representatives to indicate what problems they envisaged with regard to a unified country-level structure for field activities. He was aware that a working group was to consider that topic, but his delegation would appreciate a preliminary response.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said he saw no basic difficulty in the programme approach, which stemmed from system-wide consultation, provided that it was viewed as a means of enabling a Government to pursue specific policies rather than of imposing a programme on it. The pattern should be one of a government programme to which the components of the United Nations system each contributed where it had a comparative advantage, and guided, wherever relevant, by the global principles and objectives established as a result of other work carried out by the United Nations system and intergovernmental bodies, such as in standard-setting.

ILO viewed the new framework as a challenge and an opportunity. It would like to see its own traditional tripartite partnership renewed and enhanced, since it was important that the new measures should continue to involve the technical contribution of the specialized agencies; otherwise, the activities would become another, more expensive form of bilateral assistance.

Various reforms were being implemented by ILO, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/211, especially in decentralization and coordination at

(Mr. Sorensen, ILO)

field level. The network of field advisers was being overhauled, and multidisciplinary teams were aiming at a more direct application of technical services in the context of the new support cost arrangements. The new trend should provide greater synergy in regular budget activities.

A second element of ILO's reforms was a new framework for defining field-level policies, involving a more systematic discussion of medium-term and long-term priorities and assistance targets. That approach should enhance and clarify ILO's own part in inter-agency efforts.

Thirdly, in view of constraints on resources, ILO was focusing increasingly on its core mandate and on those areas in which it enjoyed a clear comparative advantage. Nevertheless, it was still willing to become involved in other areas if its services were required.

On the question of relations with the resident coordinator, he felt that coordination had the greatest impact at country level when it focused on common goals and strategies. In that regard, a notable contribution had been made to the idea of promoting United Nations country teams by the series of workshops organized for resident representatives at the ILO training centre in Turin. That initiative had been very well received and a follow-up was being planned in the form of further training activities with emphasis on the training of national counterparts.

Mr. GORDON-SOMERS (United Nations Development Programme), replying to questions concerning the progress made in establishing a presence in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), noted that only six weeks had elapsed since the adoption of the relevant Governing Council decision, and that UNDP was engaged in an innovative operation with limited staff resources. Nevertheless, 11 missions had already been sent to the CIS and a growing understanding had been established between UNDP and the Governments concerned, laying the groundwork for a unified field presence in the six countries designated by the Secretary-General. In addition, the countries concerned had shown themselves willing to participate in the experience and to share the costs involved. The resources made available by the Governing Council were very modest and a highly cost-effective approach would therefore be required. He agreed that extensive consultation was required with other

(Mr. Gordon-Somers)

agencies concerning funds and programmes and acknowledged that there had been some shortcomings in information-sharing. However, a task force had now been set up and UNDP would attempt to supply it with all possible information. Indeed, a report had been submitted on 11 July 1992.

With regard to the recruitment of suitable individuals to run the new offices, he noted that a number of names had been submitted to the Secretary-General and to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). With only $3 million available it was not possible to set up UNDP field offices of the traditional type and consequently it would be necessary to rely heavily on the individuals appointed to negotiate both with the countries concerned and with those donors willing to provide assistance in the form of trust funds or other contributions. The CIS operation offered an opportunity for constructive experimentation and the emphasis must be on finding the best individuals available and keeping costs to a minimum. A full report would be submitted to the Governing Council at its February 1993 session.

Mr. DEANE (World Health Organization), replying to questions concerning decentralization by the representatives of Canada and Morocco, pointed out that WHO had six regional offices with interregional committees, as well as 113 country offices. There was therefore substantial delegation of authority at country level, although the situation tended to vary in accordance with different regions and programmes.

On the question of resident coordinators, he felt that the United Nations system as a whole had accepted their team leadership role. In his view, that role was compatible with the lead agency concept. With regard to unified offices, WHO had a constitutional mandate requiring it to assist and advise national health authorities. As a result, its representatives were often based in national health ministries, which was the best place for them to offer guidance and promote dialogue with Governments. The focus of United Nations activity must be on developing structures to enable Governments to coordinate aid themselves in accordance with their own programmes. While recognizing that the United Nations system must be coordinated and integrated, he was not convinced of the need for actual physical integration at country level.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund), replying to a question by the representative of the Netherlands, acknowledged that ACC had encountered problems in attempting to ensure adequate coordination. However, that was inevitable in dealing with a new and rapidly changing situation without a properly established staff. Missions to the CIS must be team missions and ways must be found of ensuring that the system as a whole was consulted and kept informed. Advance consultation was needed with organizations and their governing bodies before memoranda of understanding were negotiated with the CIS countries. A team approach was needed, with a team leader who was independent but represented the United Nations system as a whole.

Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that the question of a unified presence in the CIS countries was still under review and no firm decision had yet been taken. However, the statement made by the representative of UNDP was inconsistent with the Secretary-General's report on the Chernobyl accident, which stated clearly that joint offices of the United Nations and UNDP would be set up in two countries, namely Ukraine and Russia. Furthermore, the UNDP Governing Council had drawn up criteria for the location of offices, specifying that they should be sited in the countries with the lowest per capita GNP and the largest country programme resources. In the light of those criteria, he would welcome clarification on how Russia and Ukraine had been selected.

Turning to the question of the relations between the ACC Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)) and agencies, he noted that in May 1992 the Governing Council had announced new acceptance criteria for CCSQ (OPS) whereby projects would be selected if appropriate to the services which CCSQ (OPS) provided. One criterion was that cross-sectoral projects would be automatically eligible. He wanted to know whether the agencies found the criteria acceptable and what consultation there had been with agencies prior to their adoption.

Mr. CHASE (World Food Programme) said that his agency had collaborated extensively with other agencies, notably UNICEF and UNHCR, in providing emergency food assistance and meeting the special needs of refugees

(Mr. Chase)

in Nagorny-Karabakh and Armenia. However, much of the assistance had been provided by bilateral donors and WFP participation had not been seen as essential.

With regard to development activities, although it would be part of a more coherent United Nations presence in the long term, WFP involvement was not being contemplated at present. WFP was already having difficulties in meeting more pressing needs in the least developed countries, and there were no short-term plans to provide assistance in the CIS. Nevertheless, it would monitor the situation and would work closely in future with the lead agency, UNDP.

With regard to decentralization, improvements had been made in recent years and more recruitment was taking place at the field level. In addition, there was increasing delegation of authority and more delegations were being sent to the field. However, there were three main constraints on decentralization. The first, common to all agencies, was the considerable variation in the size of programmes and in the level of staff competence. The second, unique to WFP, was that the purchasing and allocation of food, as well as the relevant shipping arrangements, all had to be dealt with centrally at headquarters level. The third constraint concerned the agency's General Regulations, which stipulated that each specific funding activity had to be approved by its governing body. As a result, it was difficult for decisions on funding levels or programmes to be taken in the field.

In reply to the question by the representative of Pakistan concerning obstacles to more effective utilization of the role of resident coordinator, he noted that the fact that the UNDP resident representative was also the resident coordinator placed an inordinate burden on the individual concerned, making it very difficult for him to undertake the wide range of functions he was now called on to perform. In addition, the resident coordinator needed to have special capabilities in the field of team-building, and such qualities were sometimes hard to find. He also felt that resident coordinators needed to be provided with special funds and special staff if they were to perform effectively the coordinating and strategic functions under resolution 44/211.

The main goal of coordination was to ensure a coherent programme within

(Mr. Chase)

the United Nations system and among the various agencies, so as to ensure that the emphasis was placed on common areas and goals in the framework of priorities established by Governments. Considerable progress had been achieved towards that goal. However, he was not at all convinced that a United Nations ambassador could be empowered to take decisions affecting the level of activity or composition of other agencies without eroding the responsibility, authority and accountability of the heads of agencies.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

UNITED
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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

For participants only

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Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 16 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. GUERRERO (Vice-President)	(Philippines)
later:	Mr. AMAZIANE (Vice-President)	(Morocco)
later:	Mr. GUERRERO (Vice-President)	(Philippines)

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Organization of work

Operational activities for development (continued)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief Official Records Editing Section, Office of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, supported by Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), said that more time was required to examine the recommendations on acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and on poverty alleviation, circulated that morning by the Bureau, and she therefore requested postponement of the scheduled consultations on those recommendations.

Mr. SETH (India) said that the proposed informal consultations on the coordination segment were, presumably, intended to lead to consensus recommendations. However, since the recommendations resulting from the discussions in the coordination segment merely reflected the views of the President or the Bureau, as he saw it, there was no scope for consultations or negotiations on those recommendations.

The PRESIDENT said that General Assembly resolution 45/264 called for a summary by the President of the high-level segment but said nothing about a document on the coordination segment, calling merely for recommendations resulting from its discussions. Those recommendations had been prepared on the subjects of AIDS and poverty alleviation; it was now up to the members to decide on the appropriate modality for their presention to the General Assembly. That was the purpose of the scheduled informal consultations.

Mr. SETH (India) said that, in his interpretation, the intention of resolution 45/264 was for the President to prepare views, on his own authority, on the outcome of discussions in the coordination segment, just as he had for the high-level segment.

The PRESIDENT said that Economic and Social Council decision 1992/217 stated that the coordination segment would conclude with recommendations to the organizations of the United Nations system related to the two themes under discussion, without stipulating the form those recommendations should take. The United Kingdom had proposed that the Bureau, with the help of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Council, should formulate recommendations; that had been done. It was not for the Bureau, however, to determine whether or not those recommendations should be negotiated or whether they should lead to suggestions for new action not foreseen in resolution 45/264.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that the recommendations circulated by the Bureau were of great value and that time should be given to their study. If the coordination segment was to have been worth while, it was essential that the Council should reach consensus on the questions of AIDS and poverty alleviation; he therefore believed that members should endeavour to reach consensus recommendations on the basis of the recommendations formulated by the Bureau.

Mr. JOMAA (Observer for Tunisia) said that his delegation had taken an active part in the drafting of resolution 45/264 and it fully endorsed the views put forward by the representative of India, namely, that recommendations should be formulated on the basis of the discussions and transmitted, without any negotiation, in the report of the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly. It was not the duty of the Council to negotiate those recommendations, but merely to determine whether or not they accurately reflected the views expressed during the coordination segment. When resolution 45/264 had been drafted, there had been strong opposition to the idea that the recommendations should be negotiated: they were to be made purely on the basis of a summary of the debate.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) said that the discussion of the recommendations should be postponed until the Group of 77 had discussed the paper. It would be best to resume the discussion of operational activities and defer taking a decision on the recommendations until the following week.

Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) stressed the need to discuss the results of the coordination segment to avoid giving contradictory recommendations. Otherwise it would be said that the coordination segment was unable to make recommendations to the United Nations system because of a lack of consensus.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/28, 29, 64; A/47/235-E/1992/69 and Add.1 and 2, A/47/264-E/1992/71, 73 and 98; E/1992/L.23 and L.28)

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the United Nations system had an important role to play in international cooperation to revitalize development in the 1990s. In the current international environment, there was a danger that the least developed countries might become marginalized. The need to increase resources for operational activities, therefore, could not be overemphasized. His country urged donors to increase their contributions for operational activities, preferably on a multi-year basis, and called for implementation of the Programme of Action for the 1990s for the Least Developed Countries on an urgent basis.

In implementing General Assembly resolution 44/211, procedures pertaining to programme and project formulation, design, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation must be simplified and harmonized. The divergent procedures followed by various agencies placed additional burdens on Governments and strained the system. Despite repeated requests for simplified procedures and structures, not much had been achieved. There was also a need for more capacity-building in developing countries and greater utilization of existing national capacities with increased use of national experts and professionals.

Decentralization and accountability would ensure effective utilization of resources and make the system more responsive to the needs of the countries concerned. Although some agencies had taken positive steps in that regard, in a number of cases decentralization had been accompanied by cumbersome procedures. Authority must be delegated to the field level in an environment of trust between headquarters and field offices. The role of resident coordinators should be enhanced and resident coordinators should be chosen from within the system and have proven development experience and leadership qualities. In that connection, integrated development programmes must be

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

flexible enough to respond to the specific needs of each country. The developing countries had the primary responsibility for the formulation and implementation of their development plans, and self-reliance was the objective of United Nations assistance. The resident coordinator could also coordinate United Nations humanitarian assistance but should maintain his political neutrality.

Reform measures should uphold the principles of universality, neutrality, non-conditionality and respect for the sovereignty of States and promote democratic decision-making and transparency. Although Bangladesh welcomed measures to ensure increased resource flows for operational activities on a stable and predictable basis, it felt that that should not put an additional burden on developing countries. Lastly, there was a need to address specific issues such as increased resource flows to the developing countries, equitable trading systems, increased market access, solution of the debt problem and the transfer of technology.

Ms. WYRSCH (Observer for Switzerland) said that operational activities involved five main functions: helping Governments define national development priorities and establish programme frameworks, improving management of the development process and aid coordination, promoting regional cooperation, providing developing countries with the expertise of the specialized agencies and institutions, and elaborating innovative approaches for international development cooperation. In order to fulfil those functions, the United Nations system had a considerable analytical and technical capacity which should be further enhanced.

There was a need for a new form of cooperation between the partners in development. Her delegation supported the approaches based on coherent assistance "packages" to be defined by each recipient country on the basis of its specific needs. In that connection, the United Nations system must have stable and predictable financial resources in order to carry out its functions to the satisfaction of both recipient and donor countries. It was gratifying to note that greater use was being made of such coordination mechanisms as consultative groups and round tables.

(Ms. Wyrsch, Observer, Switzerland)

In order to enhance the cohesiveness of operational activities, the Council should define the responsibilities of the resident coordinators and the criteria used in selecting them and establish lines of communication between them and the Secretariat. The various organizations, for their part, should focus on the areas in which they had comparative advantages and expand their impact assessments in order to draw the necessary lessons for future development activities. Solutions must be found to the urgent questions relating to intergovernmental management and relations between the secretariats and executive bodies of those institutions. In that connection, Switzerland supported the views and conclusions set forth in the Nordic United Nations project.

With regard to overall management of the system, the Department of Economic and Social Development should be the management and supervisory body for the entire United Nations development system, and the Administrative Committee on Coordination should play a crucial role in the area of inter-agency coordination; its responsibilities should be clearly defined. The work done by the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions, particularly concerning the guidelines drawn up for the representatives of the various agencies in the field and training initiatives, was encouraging and should continue. Switzerland attached great importance to the work of the open-ended working group to follow-up the discussion of the system-wide reform and would participate actively in its activities.

The PRESIDENT informed the Council that the resident coordinator in Pakistan was available to talk to the Council about his activities in the field. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to hear the resident coordinator.

It was so decided.

Mr. von SPONECK (Resident Coordinator in Pakistan) said that at the current time 19 United Nations organizations and programmes, including IMF and the World Bank, were represented at different levels in Pakistan. In the past four years, 14 development agencies had begun to cooperate and implement joint programmes. As the resident coordinator, his task was to facilitate and promote inter-agency communication and activities. In 1988 a decision had

(Mr. von Sponeck)

been taken at a meeting of all the heads of agencies to conduct monthly meetings focusing on such substantive issues as women in development, the national conservation strategy, drugs and rural development. Through such regular exchanges of information, the heads of agencies had become well acquainted.

A decision had then been taken to analyse the capacity of the individual agencies to implement programmes relating to women in development and evaluate the success of such activities. The resulting study had been published and was still being used. Subsequently, the group had identified three major areas of concern to the Government: population growth, basic education and rural income and employment. Work in those areas had led to a package of recommendations on projects being redesigned to incorporate those concerns into development activities. During that process, a number of other projects involving fewer agencies had been designed and implemented. The ideas for such collaboration had come easily, owing to the regularity of the agency meetings. A consultant had been hired to review the reports on the three issues, with a view to the joint financing and implementation of an operational programme.

In addition, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP were elaborating distinct country programmes which would be analysed together and linked to ensure that the agencies were not working at cross purposes.

Various departments of the Pakistan Government had been involved throughout the process and viewed the agencies as a team. He hoped that the method of work he had described could be formalized so that similar cooperative efforts could be carried out by the agencies in other countries.

Mr. RAKOTONAIVO (Madagascar) emphasized the importance which his delegation attached to the operational activities of the United Nations system. It would express its views on the specific options presented in document E/1992/64 in the new ad hoc working group.

The reforms envisaged must respect the fundamental principles of neutrality, non-conditionality, universality, the voluntary nature of contributions, the sovereignty of recipient countries with respect to their goals and priorities and democratic decision-making.

(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

Steps must be taken to enhance the cohesiveness and efficacy of the operational activities of the system. Clear policy guidelines must be adopted by consensus in the General Assembly and the Council, both of which should play an enhanced role. Their mandates must therefore be clearly delineated on the basis of Article 13, paragraph 1.b, Article 63, paragraph 2, and Article 64, paragraph 1, of the Charter, in order to avoid overlapping and duplication. It was not necessary to establish a new policy-making body.

There should be a clear separation between the policy guideline function and the management of operational activities. Technical efficacy and political participation were key factors to be borne in mind in the exercise of those functions. The decision-making machinery should be guided by the fundamental principles to which he had referred.

An integrated approach to development was essential, and required that the established rules be applied to all the agencies. The full mobilization of the sectoral capabilities and institutional infrastructure of the system was also essential, in the interest of ensuring the optimum use of resources. The division of labour between the United Nations system and the specialized agencies should be improved. The same principles should govern reforms needed at the field level, where further decentralization of management responsibilities would enhance the impact of operational activities.

His delegation welcomed the fact that the reforms under way focused on bringing recipient countries more fully into the planning and implementation process. He underscored the importance of strengthening national capacity at all stages of project development, training national cadres and helping recipient countries develop a programme approach. His delegation also welcomed the new emphasis, in project evaluation, on assessing the impact and results of activities. He drew attention to various ways in which his country cooperated with the United Nations system and underscored the importance of strengthening coordination at the national level between the organizations of the system, on the one hand, and international and governmental bodies, on the other hand.

It was generally recognized that the financial crisis facing the institutions responsible for operational activities was primarily the result

(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

of a lack of support from certain key donor countries. However, the developing countries needed increased financial aid more than ever now, in view of their serious economic plight and the human and social cost of the economic and political reforms they had undertaken. The proposal for a financing mechanism based on a system of negotiated pledges would not resolve the resource shortage. The success of the operational activities of the United Nations system would depend above all on the political and financial commitment of the major donor countries, and on the participation of recipient countries in accordance with their ability to pay.

Mr. BAHADIAN (Brazil) said that there undeniably was room for improvement in the governance and financing of the operational activities of the United Nations system. Efforts to bring about that improvement should be pursued within the broader context of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. His delegation welcomed the many constructive proposals which had emerged during the high-level segment of the Council's deliberations and looked forward to participating actively in the ad hoc open-ended working group established to review those proposals. As discussions of reform options proceeded, the operational activities of the United Nations must preserve their essential characteristics of universality, neutrality, non-conditionality, respect for national priorities and democratic participation in the decision-making process.

His delegation regretted that the Secretariat had not been in a position to present a report on the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities as requested in General Assembly resolution 46/219. He hoped that the report would be available sufficiently in advance to permit a detailed analysis by all delegations and a wide-ranging and fruitful discussion in the General Assembly.

The impact of the current global economic situation was more harshly felt, internationally, in inverse proportion to the level of development and, nationally, in direct proportion to the vulnerability of the diverse groups within society. It was important to acknowledge that strengthening cooperation to alleviate the plight of the neediest groups within countries

(Mr. Bahadian, Brazil)

and of the neediest countries within the international community was not merely an act of solidarity, but one of collective collaboration for the benefit of all, since it would also contribute to the easing of global tensions.

Mr. HADID (Algeria) said that the experience gained thus far in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and the new ideas and proposals set forth by the Secretary-General and Member States on the enhancement of the operational activities of the United Nations system augured well for a fruitful discussion of the relevant issues. The valuable initiative of the Nordic countries had already found expression in General Assembly resolution 46/182 on the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance. The greater cohesiveness and reforms recommended by the Nordic project could be achieved through the judicious use of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. His delegation endorsed the general outlines of the Nordic proposals to reform the structure of the executive bodies of the funds and programmes of the system, provided that weighted voting was not introduced into the decision-making process. He also cautioned that the proposed new methods for financing operational activities risked placing an additional burden on the developing countries.

During the current debate attention should focus on the adequacy of political and financial support for operational activities, bearing in mind the technical assistance requirements of the developing countries both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Among the reforms necessary to consolidate such support were an increase in the system's coordination capacity, the introduction of steps to ensure greater programme integration and complementarity, the harmonization of programming cycles and procedures, greater decentralization, increased attention to strengthening national capacity and the increased use of technical cooperation among developing countries for project implementation.

The Council and the General Assembly should strengthen the mandate of the newly established Department of Economic and Social Development with respect to coordination. His delegation supported the concept of establishing a unified United Nations presence in each recipient country under the direction

(Mr. Hadid, Algeria)

of a resident coordinator who would have full authority for coordination in the field. It was also important to ensure the harmonization of the programming cycles of the various funding agencies, which in turn also should simplify their internal procedures, the complexity and diversity of which often hampered efforts of the developing countries to coordinate inputs from the United Nations system.

His delegation appreciated the substantial contribution already made by United Nations operational activities for development, and also felt that attention should be devoted to exploring as yet untapped opportunities. It was also important to explore ways to ensure that technical assistance of the United Nations system produced tangible results.

The discussion of the reform process should proceed in accordance with the principles of neutrality, universality and multilateralism. His delegation looked forward to contributing to the process in the new ad hoc working group.

Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) said that the consultants' report (E/1992/64, annex) made it clear that the problems affecting the operational activities of the United Nations system required, inter alia, greater coordination of policy guidance, more clear-cut definitions of areas of responsibility and the rationalization of the agendas of the various bodies concerned. The proposal calling for the consolidation of various basic resolutions and evolving mandates into more formal statutes for subsidiary funds, programmes and bodies and the suggestion that policy-making functions should be exercised at the highest level definitely should be adopted.

His delegation shared the concern expressed in the report regarding the inadequate use of existing resources. To rectify the problem, he agreed that changes were needed in the existing system of governance. The functions of the proposed International Development Council could be assumed by the revitalized Economic and Social Council. The proposal to establish smaller executive bodies merited careful consideration. It was essential to ensure the effective participation of all interested parties, and the principles of universality, transparency, full representation and non-conditionality should guide any discussion on reform. Furthermore, operational activities must be

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

coordinated with local governments, bearing in mind the national development priorities of the recipient country.

Two basic objectives must be borne in mind when considering the reform of the system of financing. Firstly, budgetary resources must remain stable and, secondly, the level of resources for development assistance must be increased. Any pledge by developing countries of budgetary resources must be accompanied by counterpart contributions from donor countries. Accordingly, the voluntary contributions referred to in the Nordic proposal should be considered supplementary contributions; they should remain at current levels, and should in no case fall below 0.7 per cent of GNP of the donor countries. The scale for the proposed assessed contributions must be designed in such a way that the developing countries received more than they contributed. Under the proposed system of negotiated pledges, the share contributed by the developing countries could in fact increase if counterpart funds also were provided, thereby generating the additional resources being sought.

Lastly, he underscored the importance which his delegation attached to the role of resident coordinators in ensuring the coordination, efficiency and implementation of operational activities.

Mr. RAICHEV (Bulgaria) said that technical cooperation was important in order to find concrete solutions to the unprecedented social, economic and ecological problems facing mankind. In that connection, it was particularly important to scrutinize and adjust, as necessary, the United Nations role in operational activities. UNDP had the potential to respond to the complex changes taking place in the field of social and economic development. Bulgaria appreciated the Programme's efforts to define new concepts for human-centred development and seek new ways to ensure effective technical cooperation responding to the needs of Member States. Guided by the principles of universality and non-conditionality, UNDP would be able to meet the requirements set forth in General Assembly resolution 44/211.

There was a need to take more action-oriented decisions on ways to enhance the efficiency of United Nations operational activities and coordinate actions taken under other multilateral and bilateral arrangements. His delegation agreed that it was necessary to ensure further incorporation of

(Mr. Raichev, Bulgaria)

technical cooperation activities in national development efforts and focus attention on strengthening national capacities for planning, designing, implementing and evaluating technical cooperation programmes and activities. At the same time, the modalities for national execution should not preclude the utilization of the experience and expertise of the specialized agencies and regional commissions. His delegation was concerned that the complexity of the new support costs arrangements might impose a substantial administrative burden on recipient Governments and felt that such arrangements should be simplified.

Recent social and economic changes necessitated greater flexibility in the programming of technical cooperation and Bulgaria therefore supported the programme approach. At the same time, the traditional form of cooperation based on specific projects should still be applied where appropriate and UNDP should continue to provide funding for regional projects whose benefits had been demonstrated.

Bulgaria favoured the further decentralization of the capacities and authorities of the United Nations system and the strengthening of UNDP field representation. In addition, there should be stronger coordination between UNDP, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and other aid institutions and funds.

Bulgaria firmly supported the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211, and called for a permanent focus on the substantial issues of human resource development, environmental protection, participation in development, transfer of technology, management development, women in development and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), as those issues constituted the core of the development process.

His delegation noted with appreciation the support given to the countries in economic transition and stressed the importance of the principle of universality.

Finally, he expressed support for the re-establishment of an operational regional office of UNDP in Europe, which would considerably enhance the efficiency and management of its programmes in that area.

Mr. Amaziane (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. AGUILAR HECHT (Observer for Guatemala) said that Guatemala accorded great importance to the operational activities of the United Nations system, and supported everything that had been said on the topic by the Chairman of the Group of 77. However, decisions on reform or adjustment of the operational activities system must be approached with caution and the dialogue between recipients and donors must be strengthened. The arduous negotiations of past General Assemblies had given meagre results, and to the extent that the system failed to meet its goal of fostering economic growth and social development, international peace and security would be imperilled.

The proposal to abolish the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly was for the moment not acceptable to his delegation, since there was as yet no other open forum for debate on the issues assigned to those Committees. However, the creation of new bodies to study operational activities could be debated, taking into account the concerns of the developing countries for whose benefit those activities had been conceived. Clearly, duplication of effort should be avoided through improved coordination, and close cooperation ensured in order to make the best use of the limited financial resources available.

His delegation was sympathetic to the concept of an integrated programme approach but felt that recipient countries should continue to have access to information on agency projects that could benefit them. The idea regarding United Nations ambassadors was less than clear; the resident coordinator system had thus far worked reasonably well, though refinements were needed. The principles that had always governed operational activities should be maintained.

In spite of the achievements of operational activities, poverty was on the rise in developing countries; structural adjustment programmes had been hard to implement, and the incalculable social cost had imperilled those countries' efforts at democratization. The situation was precarious, and investment was needed to propel development, particularly in the form of educational systems that would lead to advancement for vulnerable and marginal groups.

(Mr. Aguilar Hecht, Observer, Guatemala)

The technical cooperation for development provided by the United Nations was needed and must continue. National execution, which made use of national capacity and could stimulate national management of plans and projects, should continue to be the preferred mode of development. Resolution 44/211 needed to be implemented while the system's coherence and coordination were improved.

Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-President, resumed the Chair.

Mr. RADE (Netherlands) asked how many States of the former Soviet Union were currently negotiating memoranda of understanding with UNDP on the opening of United Nations offices; how many resident representatives or other United Nations personnel had been appointed, and in how many countries they would operate; what were the chances of creating UNDP regional offices; and what financial support there was for a unified United Nations presence in the newly independent States; whether the issue had been discussed in the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC); and whether other agencies were prepared to make a financial contribution to such a unified presence in Member States.

Mr. GORDON-SOMERS (United Nations Development Programme) said that one agreement had been signed, with Belarus, and that another, with Armenia, was in the drafting stage.

Some resident representatives had been nominated through ACC machinery. No infrastructure or UNDP office was being created in the countries involved, but that there might be just one individual, working in a hotel, assigned to familiarize the host Government with the workings of UNDP. However, even that modest presence had already awoke some interest, and more dialogue would surely follow. The possibility of regional service centres was still under consideration, though no decision had been made; it was thought that such centres might be more cost-effective.

Replying to a question by the representative of Japan at a previous meeting, he said that there were offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. There had been discussions with the Secretary-General regarding the other agencies possible contributions from those six countries.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) asked what steps had been taken to enhance the quality of training at the field level and to promote inter-agency coordination of training and what action the United Nations funds and agencies, especially those without decentralization mechanisms, were taking to delegate decision-making to country level. He would be glad to have the answers in writing.

Mr. DEMONGEOT (United States of America) requested clarification of the comment made by the representative of WHO at the previous meeting to the effect that WHO's constitutional mandate required it to locate its field staff within the respective ministries of health, and asked why the WHO mandate differed in that regard from those of FAO, UNESCO and so on.

Noting that WHO regional bureau advisers were often retired officials of the host Government, he said that there appeared to be some risk of confusion. In the programme approach it was important for there to be a dialogue between the United Nations system and the Government of the country involved. However, if the two were overly integrated "dialogue" was impossible.

Similarly with capacity-building, coordination efforts by the host Government should not be confused with those carried out by the resident representatives. Rather, the United Nations presence should help the host Government carry out its own planning.

With respect to the financial constraints that FAO had said limited its expansion at country level, agencies should, before requesting additional funding, look at possible improvements in their field representation. The ILO approach of trying to set up subregional interdisciplinary teams deserved consideration, as it might improve cost-effectiveness.

Finally, he commended ILO on its resolve to focus its technical assistance in areas where it held a comparative advantage, and hoped the other specialized agencies would follow suit.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) wondered to what extent the United Nations system had been able to understand and implement the previous year's agency support cost successor arrangements, which were notably complex, and whether agencies were satisfied with the content of the decision.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said, with respect to the broader training aspects of resolution 44/211, and particularly the enhancement of coordination arrangements at the field level, the agencies had taken various initiatives on their own to train their own staff in the new arrangements. A programme for the training of trainers was under development for UNDP and agency staff and selected government officials.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that more training was being done than was generally supposed. FAO had training programmes for national execution and for national project directors. With respect to decentralization and financial constraint, he thought everything possible should be done to cut costs and see to it that assistance was given where it was most needed.

The various agencies had been intimately involved for several years in the decisions on support costs and felt that they were propelling the system in the right direction; unfortunately, the arrangement was not yet working.

Mr. DEANE (World Health Organization), replying to the question put by the representative of the United States, said that the constitutional mandate of his organization was to assist the national health authorities, and that it was at the request of the host Governments, that a number of employees were based at the ministries of health. Since WHO attempted to use national capacity whenever possible, a certain number of its staff were retirees from the national Governments.

Who had no difficulty with the multisectoral approach. He noted that the Consultative Committee on Operational Activities was in the midst of an extensive training programme to develop national capacity for identification of development programmes.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 17 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A MODALITY IN THE FORMULATION, PREPARATION, EXECUTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (E/1992/75)

Mr. AMBATCHEW (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/75), said that it briefly reviewed the relevant decisions and guidelines of the General Assembly, the High-level Committee for the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The report identified major constraints and made a number of recommendations. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries had underlined the need for extensive use of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) in all the programmes and activities of the United Nations system. The report briefly outlined the progress made in that area.

In the past greater attention had been paid to the promotional aspects of the modality, but increasing efforts were being made to apply it to the implementation of programmes and projects. However, there were major constraints, including the quality and availability of data on the capacities existing in developing countries, weak mechanisms for promoting TCDC at the national level, and problems related to recruitment, internal procedures and finance. Use of the modality was not widespread and its full potential had not been realized. The reluctance of the United Nations system and of Governments to consider TCDC as a viable option was a further stumbling-block and a change in attitude was needed. In that connection, he welcomed the step taken by UNDP in identifying TCDC as a priority area for the period 1992-1996, to be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of programmes and projects.

(Mr. Ambatchew)

The report recommended that Governments should adopt policies to encourage national bodies to give priority to the use of the TCDC modality. It also advocated greater use of orientation seminars at the national level on the advantages of TCDC and recommended that the national focal points be strengthened. Priority should also be given to providing enhanced access to information on the capacities available in developing countries.

Mr. KONG Fannong (Director, Technical Cooperation Policy Division, Department of Economic and Social Development) said that his Department was seeking to promote TCDC in a catalytic manner in line with the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the decisions of the United Nations legislative bodies. The Department's TCDC activities could be grouped into four main categories. The first category included those activities conducted under the United Nations regular programme as a way of promoting South-South technical cooperation, such as the organization of workshops, seminars and training programmes to facilitate exchanges of experience and expertise among developing countries. The second pertained to the Department's close involvement with the UNDP Special Unit and host Governments in supporting programming exercises at the interregional and regional levels. The third category included those activities carried out in connection with UNDP programmes under the Indicative Planning Figure (IPF), while the fourth concerned active utilization in the Department's world-wide programmes of the capacities of developing countries, including the provision of experts, consultants, training and equipment.

The Department had a focal point for TCDC and maintained close cooperation with the UNDP Special Unit. The new climate of international relations called for stronger South-South cooperation backed up by complementary assistance from the North. A triangular partnership was needed for that purpose which would benefit all concerned and help the developing countries play a catalytic role in TCDC activities.

He welcomed the increased awareness of the value of TCDC shown by the UNDP Governing Council, as reflected in the fact that the Council had identified TCDC as one of its six priorities for the fifth programming cycle. As a consequence, his Department would be seeking to find more ways and means of including TCDC among its technical cooperation activities.

Mr. SALT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the issue was closely related to the wider question of how to develop TCDC further and maximize its impact. The European Community and its member States had consistently stressed the importance of both economic and technical cooperation among developing countries in promoting development but felt that the impact of such cooperation had suffered from the lack of a clear definition and an understanding of how the cooperation was to be implemented.

As the Buenos Aires Plan of Action recognized, TCDC was primarily the responsibility of developing countries, which must recognize their own skills and needs and take the initiative in linking with each other to increase the flow of technical cooperation. The United Nations system and other multilateral organizations had an important role to play in their areas of accepted expertise, while UNDP should assist developing countries in capacity-building and planning, and strengthen its efforts to help them overcome problems encountered in promoting and implementing TCDC.

The European Community and its member States were actively supporting TCDC by backing programmes for information, training and technical assistance among developing countries under the Lomé Convention and the European Development Fund. Bilateral donors had also made an important contribution, and UNDP, the United Nations regional commissions and the development banks had a vital role to play. The UNDP Governing Council had included TCDC among its six priorities for the fifth programming cycle, and UNDP could make an important contribution by building and strengthening national capacity, providing information, and promoting TCDC more effectively as a means of implementing projects.

Some developing countries already had the necessary skills of project design, implementation and evaluation, and that experience needed to be fully exploited, particularly by the least developed countries. The ultimate aim must be capacity-building in recipient countries to promote national execution of projects undertaken by the agencies of the United Nations system. Information was of key importance in ensuring that, once acquired, expertise could be passed on, and in that connection the UNDP Information Referral System (INRES) was of particular value.

(Mr. Salt, United Kingdom)

The conclusion to be drawn was that TCDC needed to be considered as a factor in all development activity. The potential for the transfer of expertise between developing countries should always be considered and the lessons learned from successful projects or programmes passed on to other countries.

Mr. Sher Afgan KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the principles and recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action remained as valid as ever and continued to provide an appropriate framework for TCDC. In the past, the full potential of TCDC had not been systematically explored, but the recommendations for reforming operational activities might offer a suitable organizational framework for its promotion, by facilitating the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on activities of the United Nations system at the field level. That would enable the system to learn from its own experience and provide a world-wide information network on innovative solutions to development problems common to developing countries.

In some cases, developing countries were in a better position to pass on knowledge than international organizations because they faced common constraints and had been required to adapt foreign models to their own circumstances. However, the relevant information on development experience was not systematically available, and the United Nations system was best placed to collect, analyse and disseminate such information at the country level. That process should be facilitated through information networks, but also through funding from the United Nations system. The existing INRES facility should be adapted to focus on development experiences as well as institutions, and particularly on innovative solutions. An information network of that kind would play a fundamental role at the programme development level, allowing TCDC to play a more prominent part. TCDC programming exercises could be adapted to focus on the exchange of information at the programming and strategy development level.

A systematic analysis of UNDP development activities over the past 40 years would automatically produce information relevant to TCDC since it was often true that innovative solutions to certain development problems could be

(Mr. Sher Afgan Khan, Pakistan)

found only in other developing countries. TCDC should be an integral part of good development and not merely a special activity conducted by development organizations outside their mainstream programmes.

The question of procurement from developing countries was also important and he welcomed the fact that the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office had begun publishing manuals indicating what individual developing countries had to offer.

TCDC could not take place in isolation and would be more fruitful in the context of a favourable international economic environment. The sharp deterioration in that environment had affected the ability of most developing countries to pursue TCDC despite their commitment to it.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the General Assembly had consistently emphasized the overriding importance of the United Nations system's technical cooperation in promoting self-reliance among the developing countries by building up their productive capability and their indigenous resources and by increasing the managerial, technical, administrative and research capabilities required in the development process. The TCDC modality was a key element of that approach, in that it meant optimum use of scarce resources through the sharing of technical expertise and skills between developing countries.

The scarcity of the resources available for development cooperation made it imperative to seek innovative and cost-effective approaches, and the TCDC modality had therefore assumed added importance as an instrument of self-reliance in the formulation and implementation of technical cooperation projects. Primary responsibility for decisions on the implementation modality remained with the country concerned, while the United Nations development system played a catalytic and supportive role.

Self-reliance constituted the ultimate goal of FAO technical cooperation with developing countries, and there were currently over 400 National Project Directors in the FAO Field Programme, as well as some 850 National Project professional staff. FAO was assisting approximately 100 nationally executed projects in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, although progress in introducing the national execution modality had not been without its difficulties.

(Mr. Ramadhar, FAO)

The main obstacles lay in the area of inadequate understanding of the potential effectiveness of TCDC, lack of awareness of the resources available, and insufficient capacities for project identification and development. The handbook referred to in paragraph 20 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75) had been extensively circulated and was an attempt to clarify modality and procedures. It was supplemented by a periodic newsletter, which enjoyed wide distribution both within and outside the Organization.

TCDC was an item in the in-country training and project formulation, monitoring, evaluation and implementation which FAO organized for National Project Directors and government officials. However, awareness of the TCDC modality and procedures was not a matter for national staff only. A one-day workshop on TCDC had been organized in April in collaboration with UNDP for the benefit of headquarters staff, and the briefing of FAO Representatives and Country Office staff was a continuing activity.

Providing information on where and how to find resources was a task which called for concerted effort on the part of the entire United Nations system, and FAO was collaborating with a variety of agencies in order to compile national compendia of capacities and needs. In particular, it was cooperating with INRES.

Apart from supporting a number of promotional TCDC activities, FAO endeavoured to integrate TCDC with project implementation through the provision of project inputs from developing countries. In many of the activities supported from the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, expert services had been obtained on TCDC terms, for example in connection with shrimp production in Guinea-Bissau. Subcontracting arrangements with a competent institution of another developing country in project implementation was another effective mechanism, as was the network approach. There were now some 135 technical cooperation networks promoted by FAO, and such longer-term institutional collaborative arrangements offered considerable scope for using the TCDC modality in technical cooperation activities.

Some development needs by their very nature transcended national boundaries. On the basis of economies of scale it was always cost-effective to treat such needs through intercountry projects, and FAO's experience had shown that such projects were ideally suited to the TCDC modality.

(Mr. Ramadhar, FAO)

South-South cooperation was not incompatible with, but rather complementary to, North-South cooperation. Regional and subregional bodies and activities offered a wide range of possibilities for using the TCDC modality in donor-assisted projects. The promotion of self-reliance was the basic purpose of technical cooperation, and the TCDC modality, which aimed to use the indigenous resources and capacities of the developing countries, was an effective means for realizing that basic goal.

Mr. NIE Hualiang (China) said that his delegation was pleased to note the progress made since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Most developing countries had included in their programme formulation and implementation an important TCDC component. While it was true that there had been substantial achievements in that area, in no small part due to the efforts made by the agencies of the United Nations development system, those achievements still fell far short of expectations, and technical cooperation among developing countries as a modality had not been fully put to use. The main reasons were, firstly, the lack of funds available to the developing countries as a result of political upheavals and serious economic difficulties and the very limited funds provided by developed countries and international organizations; and secondly, underutilization of the technologies, equipment and expertise of the developing countries themselves. In certain fields, some developing countries possessed advanced technologies which were available at low cost, and their underutilization was a problem which should be addressed.

In the light of the importance China attached to TCDC activities, it had established a focal point for the coordination of such activities. For decades, China had availed itself not only of the assistance provided by international organizations, but also of substantial resources of its own in providing active support for TCDC. Through the organization of training courses, the sending of experts abroad and other activities, China had shared its technologies with other developing countries and helped them in the implementation of their national programmes. It would continue to participate actively in such programmes, and hoped that the developed countries and the agencies of the United Nations system would make further efforts to promote TCDC activities.

Mr. SOUTTER (Canada) said that, while it was highly appropriate that the United Nations development system should take a leading role in the promotion of the TCDC modality, his delegation was concerned to note from the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75) that progress had been less than rapid. Although useful progress reports had been produced and various recommendations made, there had been little overall system management to promote and expedite implementation of the modality. In fact the initiative had largely rested with the individual agencies within the system, some of which, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and FAO, seemed to have responded actively. Some overall coordination and promotion was evidently required. In that connection, it would be desirable if the Department of Economic and Social Development could take the lead both in analysing the problem and in finding suitable ways to implement the TCDC modality further throughout the United Nations development system.

While many of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report were in themselves useful, they illustrated the problem of implementation, in that there was a definite gap between real impact and unspecific exhortation. The need for system-wide management of the implementation process required action on many of the issues discussed in connection with operational activities, such as strengthening the role of the resident coordinator and decentralization.

In conclusion, he said that there was significant potential in promoting regional approaches to the problem, and it would be timely to introduce the concept of "regional execution" into the development vocabulary, to supplement the term "national execution".

Mr. MONTERO (Chile) said that his country attached great importance to TCDC as a useful tool for promoting national and collective self-sufficiency and had always complied with the recommendations of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the High-level Committee. However, Chile was concerned that TCDC had not been fully put to use and had not advanced to the desired extent, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75).

The recommendations contained in the report were highly relevant, particularly with regard to the need for a change in attitude to ensure that

(Mr. Montero, Chile)

TCDC was widely appreciated and applied as an effective, less costly and a relevant modality of cooperation. He also welcomed the useful guidelines contained in the report and the realistic overall assessment of the shortcomings in TCDC among less developed countries.

With regard to the constraints affecting TCDC, which were mainly due to lack of resources, he wished to make a number of points. Firstly, the developing countries must make a greater political commitment to TCDC and strengthen their capacity for sharing useful experiences. Secondly, that commitment must be reflected in the national and international institutions promoting and coordinating TCDC, and the developing countries must strengthen their internal structures both politically and financially. Thirdly, the role of UNDP was particularly important in terms of international support and the UNDP Special Unit should be strengthened. In that connection, he welcomed the fruitful work undertaken by the Special Unit in the framework of the Latin American Economic System.

Chile had developed a wide range of links with various other countries and was participating in many bilateral cooperation programmes of mutual benefit, mainly involving Latin American, Central American, Caribbean and Asian countries, with the emphasis on the training of experts in various fields. It had also launched a number of initiatives with African countries which it hoped to expand in the future. TCDC programmes were also under way in the Central American region in areas such as social development, combating poverty, management of international cooperation, and university cooperation.

Chile welcomed the growing awareness of the fundamental role of TCDC in eradicating poverty and promoting growth in the developing countries and hoped that it would be more effectively used in the future.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the relevance of TCDC as a modality for strengthening national capabilities and collective self-reliance remained undiminished since the adoption more than a decade previously of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. Although it was heartening to note that TCDC was viewed as an integral part of cooperation for development within the United Nations system, progress had been confined to a limited number of countries. The developing countries themselves no doubt bore primary responsibility for TCDC,

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

but resource constraints had proved to be a stumbling-block. It had been rightly recognized that exclusive reliance on extrabudgetary funding sources for the promotion of TCDC was a serious constraint which should be remedied.

A number of steps had been identified at the national level for the promotion of TCDC, including the strengthening and streamlining of the process of matching technical cooperation needs and capacities, favourable national policies (with TCDC as a preferred option), the identification of sectors where TCDC could more widely be applied, and efforts to enhance the awareness of officials. In that connection, his delegation wished to mention the important role played by the TCDC programming exercises in promoting and matching national needs and capacities in developing countries. Such exercises identified a large number of projects to be undertaken through the TCDC modality, which rightly indicated its tremendous potential. Unfortunately, many projects could not be implemented, owing to lack of resources and proper follow-up.

While agreeing with the various measures suggested for the United Nations system in paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/75), he wished to highlight the importance of changing attitudes with regard to TCDC, in addition to improving and expanding the services provided by INRES.

Mrs. SCOTT (Jamaica) said that it was timely that the Council was now making a serious effort to respond to the repeated calls for sustained coordination and coherence among the many entities within the United Nations system. Her delegation hoped that the Department of Economic and Social Development, which had now assumed responsibility for TCDC activities, would pay special attention to the TCDC modality and provide the necessary orientation and training programmes to developing countries.

TCDC must be seen as the key to the whole development effort: it was to be regarded not as an alternative but as a complement to the more conventional forms of development assistance. For that reason, it should be integrated into the United Nations development system, and not treated as a separate entity. The Secretary-General's report suggested that the United Nations agencies were cognizant of the need to intensify and expand TCDC, yet progress on the application of the modality had been painfully slow. She noted with concern that implementation constraints were due mainly to lack of funds.

(Mrs. Scott, Jamaica)

Jamaica had been engaged in a number of TCDC initiatives through the provision of personnel and training to many of its Caribbean and Latin American partners. Regional and subregional networking among developing countries had the potential for advancing the TCDC modality, particularly if telecommunications technology was used to maximum effect. For that reason, she concurred with the Secretary-General's recommendation that INRES should be improved and expanded.

The effective implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 through the efforts of the Department of Economic and Social Development and the various specialized agencies was an integral part of the process of ensuring that the operational activities of the system were responsive to the needs of developing countries. Her delegation intended to study the various proposals made in the Council for strengthening operational activities, but regretted that the relevant reports could not be produced in time for the Council's consideration.

Operational activities must be carried out in accordance with Governments' own national priorities. While adhering to the guiding principles of neutrality, universality and flexibility, the United Nations should confine its role to assisting and promoting the efforts of developing countries to meet their development goals and priorities. The international development agencies should seek to harmonize their programme cycles with those of individual countries. In the case of Jamaica, the Government had elaborated four major socio-economic imperatives in its five-year development plan for the period 1990-1995, and it expected that the valuable assistance which the United Nations could provide would be harmonized with the objectives of the Plan.

There was a clear need for a well-developed coordination mechanism at the field level, involving, inter alia, greater use of common facilities and premises, since development projects which were executed in an uncoordinated manner would serve only to frustrate the objectives of recipient Governments.

Expansion of the national execution modality should be strongly supported, but in some cases that must be a gradual process, and at all times national execution must relate to the pace of development and the particular

(Mrs. Scott, Jamaica)

circumstances of each country. Countries should themselves be able to dictate the pace of implementation. In Jamaica's case, national execution would now depend on the extent to which the Government was reorganizing its operational capabilities as a result of the ongoing measures towards liberalization of the economy. The process of economic liberalization had proved very demanding. Constraints had been placed on Jamaica's execution capability in the context of the structural adjustment programmes which had had to be implemented and which had led to drastic budgetary and staff reductions in the public sector. Factors such as those must be borne in mind when Governments' capacity to execute projects in a timely fashion was assessed.

Mr. VUKMANOVIC (World Health Organization) said that a comprehensive review of TCDC in support of the Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000 and of primary health care had been undertaken at the eighty-ninth session of the WHO Executive Board in January 1992 and at the forty-fifth World Health Assembly in May 1992. The review had indicated that WHO had effectively organized the coordination of its programmes and activities involving TCDC in order to accelerate the implementation of primary health care world wide. WHO had established focal points for TCDC at its regional offices and at headquarters, and had mobilized its technical and financial resources to facilitate networking of developing countries' institutions at the national, intercountry and interregional levels.

In the field of health, TCDC activities involved, for example, the production, procurement and distribution of essential drugs and medical equipment, the development of low-cost primary health care technologies, joint programmes for human resources development, and collaborative research and control programmes for certain diseases. Within the framework of WHO's activities, TCDC was thus an integral part of all programmes, whether or not they were financed from its regular budget or from other sources.

As part of the efforts to evolve a global strategy for TCDC during the 1990s, WHO was organizing an Interregional Consultation on TCDC Programming in Health, to be held in Indonesia in February 1993. The overall objective of the Consultation would be to increase the use of TCDC by developing countries as a mechanism for addressing national health priorities. The strategy for

(Mr. Vukmanovic, WHO)

TCDC programming in health matters during the 1990s was expected to improve TCDC programming world wide, by enhancing developing countries' technical and financial resources in the health field. The Consultation would result in clearer definition of the common concepts of technical cooperation within WHO, including TCDC, and should result in a new strategy for TCDC programming and health at the country level by mid-1993.

Mr. YENEL (Turkey) said that TCDC had long been seen as simply a complementary component in development, but that there was now a clearer understanding of its importance. Any failure to exploit TCDC fully lay with the developing countries themselves rather than with the United Nations system, since in general developing countries lacked appropriate focal points. In practical terms that meant that many offers of assistance were not accepted by would-be recipient countries. What was needed was a timely means of distributing information, in which connection the Council should consider how the specialized agencies might assist in establishing appropriate networks.

Mr. AMBATCHEW (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme) said that two main issues had emerged: the need for the United Nations system to give priority to learning from past initiatives and the need for the dissemination of information. Both those issues were of great importance to UNDP and the Special Unit.

INRES had been established with an emphasis on the capacities of developing country institutions. Further consideration could be given to the role of INRES in a networking environment for the dissemination of information.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the points raised by the representative of Turkey were important. FAO was working on two information systems, relating to agricultural research and sectoral issues, and would continue its work in that area.

Mr. ATRIA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), speaking on behalf of all the regional commissions, said that he wished to comment on the role of the regional commissions in supporting TCDC. One example was offered by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the

(Mr. Atria)

Caribbean (ECLAC), which had established an inter-sessional committee to review the Commission's activities in support of TCDC. ECLAC support for TCDC involved a range of projects relating to such areas as highway maintenance, water resources, social investment and computer databases for investment projects. In some instances data networks had been established that had subsequently been maintained by extrabudgetary contributions from member States, as, for example, in the field of export insurance. ECLAC was also establishing a network relating to intraregional trade. Clearly, the promotion of TCDC activities on the basis of extrabudgetary resources presupposed a continuing interest on the part of donors.

Mr. FAN Huishun (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that the promotion of economic and technical cooperation among developing countries was a priority area for funding by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). UNIDO had established a framework of 12 general objectives, with a particular focus on workshops in such areas as information exchange and expert services.

UNIDO had a number of projects involving cooperation with Turkey, including a project relating to an inventory of national capacities in the area of small-scale industry. In addition, UNIDO had established a technical information database which, for example, contained a directory of institutions able to offer training in developing countries.

Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that TCDC should form an integrated element of programmes. Such an approach had always been taken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in its activities.

Mr. MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) said that the main constraint faced by developing countries was access to technology. It would be of interest to identify which developing countries were in a position to pursue areas of technological development, which could then be accessed by other developing countries through TCDC networks, so that the level of expertise available to developing countries as a group would be at the world level. One area of concern was that of environmentally friendly technology.

Mr. SHOJI (Japan) said that his delegation fully endorsed the emphasis on TCDC and South-South cooperation. The Government of Japan had recently adopted an official development assistance charter detailing specific modalities for bilateral cooperation between Japan and recipient countries.

Mr. RHEE (Republic of Korea) asked how developing countries could access INRES.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that INRES was accessible by computer and through UNDP field offices. Inquiries were currently running at the rate of some 4,000 a year. The emphasis would now be on improving the quality of information in the database, on decentralization so as to make access easier, and on developing software for use in field offices. UNDP was focusing on capacities already existing within developing countries. The next step would be to expand the system to include data relating to sectoral issues.

Mr. RAMADHAR (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that FAO approached the important issue of technology identification and information by means of evaluation and advice on technology appropriate to particular situations, the circulation of newsletters providing information on national experiences in applying technology to specific tasks, assistance to countries in assessing and documenting their requirements, and the compilation of directories. FAO continually appraised the results obtained and was constantly refining its approach.

Mr. FAN Huishun (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that UNIDO's work in promoting economic and technical cooperation among developing countries included organizing subsectoral workshops, whose main purpose was to provide information about the technology available in particular countries. Examples were those recently held in China, on medicinal plants and synthetic fibre technology. The workshops had been highly successful, and more were being planned.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1992/64, A/47/264-E/1992/71, E/1992/73 and 98; E/1992/L.23 and L.28)

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said that it was difficult to state how his organization viewed a unified approach to operational activities, since no accepted United Nations definition of that term yet existed. Everyone would surely agree, however, that the aim was to provide a useful input to operational activities for development and to avoid undermining the useful arrangements already in place. Improvements would depend on three key factors: a common country strategy, structured teamwork and common approaches. With regard to the first, all the agencies except one had agreed by consensus, at the time of the previous triennial policy review, on a common country strategy; it should be possible to achieve full consensus at the current review. The support of the entire structure was essential, including an enhanced role for the resident coordinator and facilities for more direct involvement of the Governments concerned.

The major deficiency was not in formal authority but in capacity. It was important that existing human capacity should not be weakened. In that regard, 85 per cent of the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund was in the field, and the field manager played the key role. The question of mandates was likewise vital. Those conferred on some agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, were unique and had made possible a capacity for achievement which must not be eroded. It should be possible, however, to enhance the role of resident coordinator without adversely affecting such mandates.

The lesson of the reform efforts of the 1970s and the associated shift in emphasis to the Bretton Woods institutions should be borne in mind: the results had sadly failed to meet the world's humanitarian needs during the past decade. The decisions which the United Nations currently had to take could either rectify or worsen the situation; the outcome in the field would be the measure of them.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that the current debate had centred on three main issues: the new support cost arrangements, training, and the role of resident coordinator. With regard to the first, he disagreed that the new arrangements had adversely affected

(Mr. Matthews)

programme implementation and had forced a reduction in the number of field experts. It was too early for those arrangements to have made any impact on the current situation, which was part of the normal cycle. Another factor was the growth in national capacity and in the trend to engage experts on a short-term basis, surely positive developments to which the United Nations system could adapt. It seemed premature, therefore, to call for a review of the situation by the General Assembly.

UNDP was running a major programme of field training in relation to the new support cost procedures. The programme would apply country by country, until all had been covered, and would involve government, agency and UNDP personnel. In a broader sense, training to cover the requirements stemming from General Assembly resolution 44/211 had already been given to some 250 field staff and would be given to some 200 more during the current year.

An example of successful coordination had been cited, at a previous meeting, by the United Nations resident coordinator in Pakistan, who was also UNDP's Resident Representative. That success had resulted chiefly from three factors: agreement among the agency representatives on basic issues; identification of the Government's strategy on vital topics such as population and employment; and close collaboration with the lead agency. Details of similar successful experiences in other countries would be circulated to members of the Council.

With reference to separating the role of resident coordinator from that of UNDP resident representative, the Administrator of UNDP, addressing the high-level segment of the current session, had said that the resident coordinator's role could best be strengthened by enhancing the coordination and funding functions. Current weakness could stem from resistance to coordination, poor capacity on the part of the recipient Government to coordinate donors' inputs, efforts by some donors to favour their own interests at the country level, and occasional uneven leadership. Coordination through a resident coordinator would succeed provided that the team leader had the confidence of all collaborators of the system, adequate resources were available, agreement was reached on a common strategy, based on a structured programme, and the need for the best possible recruitment and

(Mr. Matthews)

training conditions was recognized as essential. With regard to the latter, UNDP possessed all the essential requirements for optimum recruitment conditions and systematic training.

A joint effort was required in the task of strengthening coordination arrangements. But if UNDP support for the office of resident coordinator was removed, it would have to be replaced by some other machinery yet to be designed.

Mr. ELLIS (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the Community attached great importance to the proposed new support cost arrangements and to their potential for enhancing system-wide cooperation. The undeniable complexities could be overcome through adequate training, which UNDP was urged to carry out as speedily as possible.

The support costs were indeed intended to enhance national execution. But they were also intended to strengthen technical capacity and the provision of technical assistance by the agencies. Recipient Governments could assume at least the administrative and operational aspects of technical assistance provision, but it would be disturbing to see a reduction in the provision of technical expertise.

Mr. ATRIA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), speaking on behalf of all the regional commissions, said that, in discussing programme and project approaches, the Council must not lose sight of the regional approach. The regional commissions, although classed as small agencies in the new support cost arrangements, remained relevant to operational activities for development, and their role in the globalized approach to sustainable development problems and the impact of technological innovations should not be overlooked. Despite their limited role as executing agencies for development, their participation in operational activities for development had expanded and was currently quite sizeable in relation to their regular budget resources. The trend reflected a growing demand for their multidisciplinary services. Their experience in activities at the regional level had been mixed, but served to emphasize the need for close coordination between them and the specialized agencies and greater use of established

(Mr. Atria)

mechanisms such as joint divisions, units and missions for special programmes. Their relations with funding agencies were especially important, as could be seen from the history of mutually supportive activities, especially with UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund in past decades. There could be cases of conflict in regard to jurisdiction and responsibility if the regional commissions' role was not taken into account when global bodies were extending or strengthening their regional presence, thus pointing to the need for clear delineation. The United Nations system's development activities must not be fragmented but should aim to strengthen activity in fields suitable for a regional or subregional approach; they should foster decentralization of programmes and a greater focus on policy coordination and guidance, recognizing the regional commissions' capacity in identifying regional priorities, inter alia.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.